

## Bentley Historical Library DEI 1.0 Summary September 2022

The Bentley Historical Library is committed to representing an array of perspectives in its collections, programs, and engagements. During DEI 1.0, the Bentley Library fully supported and participated in the University's commitment to connect academic excellence with diversity, equity, and inclusion. A number of initiatives were undertaken by the Bentley, including staff training sessions, lectures, presentations, and exhibits on DEI topics.

A Bentley committee was appointed in 2021 and charged with developing a statement on potentially harmful language and content in archival collections. The statement was approved in 2022 and is posted on the Bentley's website: [Statement on Potentially Harmful Language and Content](#).

In the spring of 2022 the Bentley launched the website for the [African American Student Project](#), part of a multi-year effort begun in 2016 to develop a comprehensive database listing the names and years of attendance of every African American student who attended the University for any length of time from 1853 until 1970. The project includes a fully searchable database containing information on more than 6,000 African American students identifying hometowns, local addresses, years of attendance, membership in campus organizations, field of study, and degrees received. The website provides additional context for understanding the experience of African Americans at U-M including data visualizations, a collection of stories, autobiographies, and biographies about some of the remarkable African American students who attended the University and the diverse nature of their experiences. For much of the University's history, these student experiences were a combination of institutional barriers and the determination to overcome them.



Three new digital exhibits relating to DEI were produced by the Bentley. Two exhibits addressed gender issues. The exhibit "[Constructing Gender: The Origins of Michigan's Union and the League](#)" focused on the separate buildings for men (Michigan Union) and women (Michigan League) in the early 20th century.

# Constructing Gender: The Origins of Michigan's Union and League

[Introduction](#) [Two Buildings](#) [Two Genders](#) [Two Architects](#) [Two Million Dollars](#) [About the Exhibit](#)

## Introduction

The Michigan Union and Michigan League are favorite destinations at the University of Michigan. Generations of students have socialized and studied at these two landmark buildings that anchored the west and north sides of Central Campus when they opened in 1919 and 1929, respectively. They have provided the backdrop to countless memories made at Michigan.



A second exhibit, "[As to the Woman Question: The Admission of Women to the University of Michigan](#)" details the decision to admit women at the University of Michigan in 1870 and the debates preceding that decision.

# As to the Woman Question: The Admission of Women to the University of Michigan

[Introduction](#) [The First Attempt](#) [Changing Ideas](#) [Student Experiences](#) [About the Exhibit](#)

## Introduction

One hundred and fifty years ago Madelon Stockwell became the first woman to attend the University of Michigan, but she did not arrive at this achievement in isolation. These are the stories of the women who initially asked for a chance, the opinions that had to change, and the pioneering women who proved they belonged here too.



Initially a physical exhibit in the Bentley's reading room, the exhibit on Willis Ward was expanded as an online exhibit to more fully tell the story of the remarkable life and career of Ward, a prominent African American student-athlete thrust into the spotlight by the controversial decision to bench him in a football game in 1934 because of his race, "[Willis Ward: More Than the Game.](#)"

# WILLIS WARD: MORE THAN THE GAME

[Introduction](#) [Early Life](#) [Michigan Man](#) [A Rare Talent](#) [The Game](#) [A Full Career](#) [Legacy](#) [About](#)



A series of Bentley Engagement and Enrichment sessions (known as BEEs) featured several guest speakers and staff members providing presentations to staff on a wide variety of topics. DEI topics of BEEs included anti-racist pedagogy, reparative archival projects, LGBTQ history, Title IX and gender, the work of the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies, the Tulsa, Oklahoma race massacre, and plans for the Barak Obama Presidential Library.

The following is a chronological summary of DEI highlights of Bentley work during DEI 1.0 taken from annual DEI updates and other reporting documents.

### 2018 (Year 2)

Bentley staff and student employees participated in a variety of meetings and trainings relating to DEI, including a workshop on disability awareness and etiquette; a workshop on bystander intervention; a workshop in intercultural awareness; a presentation on the history of African American student life at Michigan (related to an ongoing Bentley project); and a presentation on the history of LGBTQ life in Michigan. Social media of the Bentley featured DEI-related stories from the archival collections. The fall 2018 issue of the Bentley Historical Library's magazine, "Collections," explored the life of LGBTQ pioneer Ruth Ellis, as well as the Fourth Amendment case that went to the Supreme Court with the White Panther Party at its center. An internal climate survey ultimately engaged all Bentley staff and led to the formation of four committees in response to the survey results, addressing communication, compensation equity, social life of staff, and the Project Archivist Program. Members of the Bentley's administrative committee began a new practice of open office hours every week to further enhance communications.

### 2019 (Year 3)

The Bentley launched public access to digitized records of the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies and the archival collection of U-M president James B. Angell.

The Bentley staff took part in training sessions relating to DEI, including "Giving and Receiving Feedback" and "Straight Talk Training." There was also a DEI-focused presentation for Bentley staff, student employees, and volunteers on the ongoing research project on the history of the African American student experience at the University of Michigan. Bentley project archivists organized and hosted an event for Bentley staff, student employees, volunteers, and colleagues from MLibrary, the Clements, the School of Information, and the Gerald Ford Presidential Library on the origins of the Barack Obama Presidential Library as presented by guest speaker Stephen Booth. A national symposium was organized in November 2018 by Bentley archivists on the topic of Teaching Undergraduates with Archives. Over 200 archivists, faculty and students from across the country registered for the symposium. Planning continued on the addition to the University of Michigan Detroit Observatory with construction anticipated to begin in 2018; the addition to the Observatory affords greater access to the original historic structure built in 1854.

The Bentley continued to formalize the inclusion of a question asking applicants about their demonstrated commitment to DEI in all searches and hiring. A “launch committee” practice began in 2019 for onboarding new archivists and within that new practice we include topics of DEI.

2020 (Year 4)

With the help of ITS, accessibility software was added to all public computers at the Bentley.

An important engagement activity in year four was the assignment for all staff to read the book “Ask A Manager” and to participate in a discussion of key findings. The Bentley Library magazine “Collections” and social media regularly featured content relating to DEI in Michigan history and University of Michigan history as well as the practices of the Bentley. The Bentley hosted a speaker series for the public (until the COVID-19 shut-down) with topics including the history of food at the University of Michigan and the beginnings of coeducation at Michigan. A final year of the winter faculty seminars on Teaching Undergraduates with Archives was held, with direct relevance to Bentley staff, faculty, and students.

In December 2019, the Bentley launched the History of U-M website <https://historyofum.umich.edu/>. The site is designed as a portal to publications and posts from across the University that deal with the history of the University in ways that are celebratory, critical, and everything in between. The site provides an opportunity to collect and promote inquiry into the University’s past. In particular, it highlights U-M’s historical confrontation and engagement with both successes and failures in achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion. The homepage regularly features several rotating pieces that have, to date, included stories on “Being Black at U-M,” the struggle to admit women in the 19th century (“As to the Woman Question”), the informal segregation and integration of student housing (“An Unwritten Law”), and the achievements of women and minorities (e.g., “In Her Own Right,” “Madelon’s World,” “Firmly in the driver’s Seat”). Although we are still working to raise the profile of the website, we can report that among the pieces most accessed are “Pride and Prejudice,” about Jim Toy and gay rights on campus; “Being Black at U-M”; and “An Unwritten Law.”



The effort to review and revise existing finding aids has expanded to include archivists from several different teams at the Bentley in a commitment to reparative work that addresses unintended harm of past descriptions that either suppressed or marginalized diverse subjects and/or creators of content.

2021 (Year 5)

The Bentley organized a public event in September 2020 to celebrate the publication by Professor Andrei Markovits and Kenneth Garner of “The Boundaries of Pluralism: The World of the University of Michigan’s Jewish Students from 1897 to 1945.”

Also in September, the Bentley together with the School of Music, Theatre, & Dance, organized a virtual event to celebrate the career and archival collection of professor emeritus Willis Patterson. [The African American Music Conference](#) celebrated Patterson’s upcoming 90th birthday. The legendary bass singer, U-M alumnus and professor was the first African American faculty member to join SMTD.

Work on the project to discover, document, and digitally share findings on the history of African American student history at the University of Michigan continued to be productive despite the limitations of COVID-19 which prevented the research team from doing onsite research for several months. The Bentley’s website began to be evaluated for improved infrastructure, accessibility, and navigation.